

RESEARCH ARTICLE**CONSTRUCTING AND NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN TALK-IN-INTERACTION:
A SOCIOPRAGMATIC FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES****Cecep Agus^{1*}, Fedro Iswandi²**^{1,2}Institut Prima Bangsa Cirebon, Jawa Barat, Indonesia**Article History**

Received 30 May 2025

Revised 16 June 2025

Accepted 15 July 2025

KeywordsIdentity Construction,
Conversation, Pragmatics,
Conversation Analysis**ABSTRACT**

This study uses a Conversation Analysis (CA) framework with a sociopragmatic orientation to investigate how individuals construct, negotiate, and reframe social identities through pragmatic strategies in everyday conversation. Unlike previous studies, which treat identity as a background variable, this research treats it as an emergent, interactional accomplishment. Drawing on naturally occurring conversations from various contexts: peer, familial, romantic, collegial, and institutional, the current study identifies consistent patterns in using pragmatic resources, such as stance-taking, humour, mitigation, epistemic markers, and politeness strategies. The study's unique theoretical contribution lies in articulating three interrelated models: (1) Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) Theory, which explains how pragmatic strategies constitute identity in context-sensitive relational terms; (2) Contextual Identity Indexicality (CII) Hypothesis, which theorises that pragmatic features act as indexicals that signal fluid, situational identities; and (3) Epistemic Identity Alignment Model (EIAM), which conceptualises identity negotiation as involving shifts in epistemic stance within asymmetrical interactions. Together, these frameworks advance the understanding of identity as a performative and context-dependent process embedded in the micro-sequential structures of conversation. The findings extend existing theories by demonstrating that pragmatic resources function not merely to manage face, but also as primary mechanisms of identity construction across relational contexts.

Introduction

Conversation is an integral part of everyday life. It is not just a means of exchanging information, but also a rich arena for performing, negotiating, and co-construction of social identities (Blitvich & Georgakopoulou, 2021; Donaghue, 2018). In coffee shops, classrooms, offices, and homes, people engage in everyday conversation that simultaneously serves interactional, relational and identity-based purposes. This study recognises that identity is not a fixed trait but a dynamic accomplishment that emerges from how individuals position themselves and others in discourse through specific pragmatic strategies (Chen & Qiu, 2025). While recent developments in sociopragmatics and conversation analysis have emphasised the performative, emergent and relational nature of identity (Arundale, 2021; Toan, 2024), empirical investigations that foreground how this identity work is achieved in everyday conversation remain limited, particularly in non-Western or bilingual contexts (Leow et al., 2025). This study addresses this gap by closely examining how identity is constructed through pragmatics in everyday conversations. It uses a conversation analysis (CA) framework sensitive to the sequential organisation of talk and the contextual negotiation of social meaning (Yu & Wu, 2021; Kizelbach, 2023).

The investigation is driven by the pressing requirement to comprehend how individuals cope with social roles and personal connections in progressively malleable and varied interactive contexts (Dharani, 2024). At a time when shifting cultural norms, hybrid identities and evolving communication media are reshaping interpersonal dynamics, it is crucial to understand how identity is constructed at the micro-level of conversation to gain critical insights into broader social processes (Stets, 2021; Gmelin & Kunnen, 2021; Liu et al., 2021). The need for urgency also arises from the implications of identity work for pedagogy, institutions and interpersonal relationships (Nilsson & Damiani, 2023). In educational settings, workplace discourse and

romantic relationships, for example, the ability to recognise and navigate identity negotiation can significantly impact relational success, social inclusion and communicative competence (Kuiper, 2023). In language education, for example, learners' capacity to engage in pragmatic identity work can affect how fluent and accepted they are perceived to be (Garcia, 2020). In organisational contexts, how colleagues align or misalign identities through informal conversation can affect workplace morale, cohesion and hierarchy (Kizelbach, 2023). However, many pragmatics studies still treat identity as a background variable rather than the outcome of interactional processes.

Conversely, the new research points to the developing complexity on the border between pragmatics, identity, and the digital technologies, which requires a new theoretical construction that supplements the traditional face to face communication. All three of these fundamental strands of digital era pragmatics, multilingual identity and AI-mediated discourse offer the necessary contrast and canvas to the focus of this study of embodied everyday conversation. Due to the proliferation of social media and messaging software, the pragmatic models are being challenged because communicative practices in the digital contexts have taken new forms. Findings of an investigation into emoji use (Li and Yang, 2018), asynchronous turn-taking (Earnshaw, 2017) and online repair show how digital affordances accommodate politeness and implicature such as emerging norms of emoji mitigation as part of multilingual online peer review. Aided by computational tools, pragmatics can now accommodate large scale sentiment and speech act classification, and thus, based on large digital corpora, the empirical mapping of politeness strategies can now be carried out. This strand demonstrates that the online conversational partners manage communication efficiency and manage faces using emerging semiotic resources, which are opposed to the embodied conversational logic but can shed light on common pragmatic forces.

Besides, recent research in multilingual pragmatics highlights the dynamicity with which speakers enact identity in terms of linguistic repertoires and enacts transitions in stance, politeness, and established relations, such as online bilingual communities have been doing since 2022 in terms of translanguaging identity work (Wei and Lee, 2024). Through this type of research, fluidity enactment of identity becomes a priority, stressing that location-based face-to-face settings only focus on identity negotiation to a certain extent. Although this research is about embodied talk, this contrast brings to the fore the futurity to how language choices and code switching index identities within online and offline settings of multilingual communication (Mustafayeva et al, 2025)

Similarly, the emergence of AI chatbots and large language models (LLMs) has created a booming research agenda in pragmatics. For example, the results of Lee & Cook (2024), which study the performance of ChatGPT on discourse completion tasks, provide shorter and more structure-conservative apologies with a smaller presence of pragmatic resources. Kim and Yi (2025) determine a new register, the delivery of the English language to machines, or the Machine Facing English, a highly structured syntax and hyper-specific lexicon when people speak to AI response texts. In the meantime, there is support in experimental studies that human users use Gricean maxims (e.g., Quantity, Relevance) to converse and evaluate AI responses via Gricean maxims when they communicate with voice AI. Through these studies, pragmatic behavior changes where interlocutors are non-human, showing new forms of identity co-construction in various contexts. Nonetheless, AI-mediated discourse has not been deeply researched compared to embodied interaction.

This research lies at the intersection of pragmatics, discourse analysis and interactional sociolinguistics. It draws on foundational theories such as Goffman's (1967) concept of 'facework', Brown and Levinson's (1987) 'politeness theory' and Heritage's (2012) work on 'epistemic stance'. It also engages with newer frameworks such as 'Relational Work' (Locher & Messerli, 2024), 'Positioning Theory' (Davies & Harré, 1990) and 'Face Constituting Theory' (Arundale, 2021). Collectively, these theoretical foundations emphasise that talk is about conveying propositions and managing social relationships and invoking identities. However, many of these theories require empirical expansion and context-sensitive elaboration to account for the nuances of identity performance in everyday, informal interactions, where humour, irony, teasing and epistemic negotiation are often central. Adopting a qualitative CA approach with a pragmatics orientation, this study addresses this need by examining how individuals use pragmatic resources such as laughter, mitigation, irony, epistemic markers, and stance-taking to construct identities in situ.

Several previous studies have laid important groundwork. For instance, Haugh and Chang (2019) examined how identity and politeness are co-constructed through affective alignment in conversation, emphasising the collaborative nature of maintaining social acceptance. Sifianou (2019) investigated politeness and impoliteness in digitally mediated interactions, revealing how role expectations shift in such environments. Similarly, Messerli and Locher (2024) argue that relational work involves both polite and impolite behaviour as context-dependent social practices, challenging the binaries that have long dominated pragmatic theory. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of these contributions are confined to specific domains such as digital discourse, intercultural communication, and institutional interactions, or remain at a theoretical level. The current study offers grounded empirical data from naturally occurring, everyday interactions across diverse relational settings, such as peer-to-peer, teacher–student, sibling and romantic partner interactions. It focuses on how identities are negotiated through conversation in real time.

The data, comprising recordings of informal and semi-formal conversations among fifteen participants, reveal consistent patterns in how speakers use pragmatic strategies to negotiate social identities. For example, in student–teacher interactions, participants manage epistemic authority and relational alignment by using mitigation and institutional references. In romantic relationships, humour and playful redirection transform conflict into bonding moments. Meanwhile, Among peers, ironic praise and laughter construct affiliative identities rooted in shared norms. These findings support the theoretical propositions emerging from this study: Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) Theory, Contextual Identity Indexicality (CII) Hypothesis and Epistemic Identity Alignment Model (EIAM). Each of these frameworks builds upon and extends existing theories by emphasising that identity is achieved through the contextual, relational and interactional use of pragmatic resources.

This research examines how people construct, negotiate and reinterpret social identities through pragmatics in their day-to-day interactions. Specifically, the study aims to analyse the sequential and pragmatic features contributing to identity construction, such as turn-taking, repair, stance-taking, and humour. Identify how these features vary across different relational contexts. Develop theoretical insights that explain identity construction as an interactional process grounded in pragmatic practice. Through a detailed analysis of naturally occurring data, the study will demonstrate that identity is not merely something we possess but perform, adjust and co-construct moment by moment in conversation.

To sum up, this research is an important and timely contribution to our understanding of identity in discourse. It bridges the gap between theory and practice in the study of pragmatics and conversation analysis, addresses the complexities of contemporary communication in a relational context, and provides new models for interpreting how people express their identity through conversation. By focusing on the pragmatic construction of identity in everyday conversations, the study enriches academic theory and offers practical insights for educators, communicators and anyone engaged in relational interaction.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach, using the Conversation Analysis (CA) framework to examine how people develop and negotiate their identities in everyday conversations. CA is particularly well-suited to this investigation as it provides detailed tools for analysing natural spoken interactions, paying close attention to how meaning, roles and social identities are produced collaboratively, one turn at a time (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). This research focuses on how people enact and perform identity in situ through everyday conversational practices such as turn-taking, repair, stance-taking, and mitigation, rather than on what they say about identity.

A total of 15 participants were selected. Eight of these were female and seven were male. The participants were aged between 18 and 40. This was done using purposive sampling. This was to ensure relevance to the study's aim. All participants were either university students, young professionals, or community members. They were fluent in Indonesian or a mix of Indonesian and English. They engaged in regular informal or semi-formal conversations in their daily lives. The participants reflected a diverse range of social relationships (e.g. peer-to-peer, superior-subordinate, familial), which helped to examine how identity construction varies across power asymmetries and social contexts. For ethical reasons, the participants were briefed about the study's aims and the recording procedures. Each participant signed an informed

consent form and was given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Recordings were made using unobtrusive digital devices, and participants were advised to only record in contexts where they and their interlocutors felt comfortable.

The data were analysed sequentially to focus on how speaker turns are constructed and responded to in ways that invoke, resist, or attribute social identities. The analytical procedures included several steps. The first step was segment selection, identifying moments where speakers engaged in explicit or implicit identity negotiation, such as self-categorisation, role assertion, teasing, and mitigation. The second step involved micro-analysis, examining turn-taking, repair mechanisms, alignment/disalignment and indexical expressions. The third step involved pragmatic feature coding, which used frameworks from politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and stance-taking literature (Du Bois, 2007) to code for facework, epistemic positioning, and affective displays. The final step is comparative interpretation, which involves identifying patterns across different social contexts, such as peer-to-peer and hierarchical communication. It also involves assessing how identity performances are interactionally achieved or challenged. This research also gives sample excerpts of the coding categories used in the analysis to increase transparency. The analytical rigor is presented with a table of codes, including definitions and sample utterances.

Pragmatic Feature	Example from Data	Coding Category
Irony	"Oh wow, look at you! Nature queen!"	ironical commendation as affiliative facework
Mitigation	"It's not always. You just notice the times I do."	Epistemic mitigation is used to play down the FTA.
Laughter	"[Laughs] Because it's every day!"	Laughter as a marker of relational alignment
Epistemic markers	"According to the syllabus..."	Institutional authority claim
Mock deference	"Okay, chef, I bow to your superior memory."	Sarcasm is a form of affiliative conflict management, which is defined as a way of resolving disagreements by building relationships.

Table 1. Sample Excerpts of Coding Categories

The work adhered to a modified version of the conventions of transcription used by Jefferson (Jefferson, 2004) that is appropriate in pragmatic research:

Symbol	Meaning
(...)	Pause (timed if over 1 sec)
[]	Overlapping speech
(text)	Uncertain hearing or gloss
::	Lengthened sound
CAPS	Emphasis or louder speech
↑	Rising intonation
↓	Falling intonation
=	Latching (no gap between turns)
(laughs)	Non-lexical vocalisation

Table 2. Transcription Conventions

The following was an example of transcript excerpt:

Data 1: Coffee shop conversation

Participants: A (female, 22), B (male, 21)

A: So I'm thinking I might just go hiking this weekend.

B: Oh wow, look at you! Nature queen!

A: (laughs) I'm just trying to get off my phone for once.

This excerpt has been coded as follows: B's "Nature queen" = ironical commendation (affiliative facework); A's laughter = taking up a playful stance (relational alignment); A's "trying to get off my phone" = mitigation/self-effacement (framing of identity)

Results and Discussion

This study presents the results of an in-depth analysis of how identity is constructed through pragmatic strategies in everyday conversations, offering a rich, multi-layered view into the dynamic interplay between language use and social positioning. Drawing on a dataset comprising five naturally occurring dialogues from diverse relational contexts — including peer-to-peer interactions, familial exchanges, collegial discussions, romantic conversations, and hierarchical institutional talk — the research demonstrates that identity is neither pre-existing nor static. Rather, it emerges as an interactional and performative accomplishment, continuously negotiated and co-constructed within the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction.

The analytical framework is grounded in Conversation Analysis (CA), enriched by insights from sociopragmatic theory, which allows for a detailed examination of how speakers employ pragmatic resources to construct, negotiate, and reframe identities moment-by-moment. By focusing on micro-level discourse features such as turn-taking practices, epistemic stance alignment, repair sequences, humour, mitigation strategies, and politeness markers, the study identifies systematic patterns of identity work embedded within conversational structures. These linguistic-pragmatic tools are shown to manage interpersonal relations and serve as primary mechanisms through which participants index and enact socially situated identities.

The data were subjected to a four-stage analytical process: segment selection based on relevance to identity-related actions; fine-grained sequential and interactional micro-analysis; coding of pragmatic features according to their discursive function; and comparative interpretation across contexts to identify recurring patterns. This rigorous methodological approach enabled the identification of consistent interactional phenomena across different relational domains, revealing the variability and coherence in how identity is pragmatically accomplished in everyday talk.

The findings illustrate that identity construction is inherently context-sensitive and interactionally contingent, shaped by the sequential deployment of pragmatic strategies that reflect participants' orientations to relational dynamics, knowledge distribution, and normative expectations. The analysis further supports the theoretical argument that pragmatic choices do not merely accompany identity performance—they constitute it. Through these insights, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of identity as a situated, emergent phenomenon, rooted in the fine-grained mechanics of conversation.

Data Set	Context	Key Pragmatic Features	Identity Constructed
Coffee Shop	Peer (students)	Irony, hedging, laughter, exaggeration	Modest, self-aware, digitally fatigued persona
Dinner Table	Siblings	Sarcasm, mitigation, mock deference	Confident expert vs. challenger sibling
Office Breakroom	Colleagues	Modesty, ironic praise, affirmation	Honest, relatable, informally bonded colleagues
Romantic Relationship	Couple	Complaint, mitigation, humor, redirect	Accountable but compensatory partner

Teacher–Student	Institutional	Epistemic shift, deference, positive politeness	Knowledgeable yet humble student; supportive authority figure
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Table 3. Pragmatic Strategies and Identity Outcomes Across Data Sets

Cross-Case Patterns of Identity Construction

The results demonstrate that peer, familial, romantic, and institutional participants consistently employ pragmatic strategies such as mitigation, ironic address, and affiliative humour to construct social identities collaboratively across the four relational domains examined. These strategies are not merely stylistic or ornamental features of interaction; rather, they function as discursive tools through which speakers co-construct and negotiate relational stances, alignments, and identities in real time. Notably, playful name-calling, such as the recurring phrases “Nature queen” or “Okay, chef”, illustrate how speakers index solidarity and intimacy rather than dominance or deference, even in contexts where asymmetrical power relations might be expected.

These identity-performative acts are particularly salient in peer and familial interactions, where the repetition of such formulae suggests a conventionalized mode of identity construction rooted in shared affective history and mutual orientation toward relational maintenance. The use of these expressions serves to both display and reinforce pre-existing relational closeness while simultaneously enacting new, contextually situated identities within the unfolding interaction. Such practices resonate with Locher & Watts’s (2005) concept of relational work, which emphasizes negotiating interpersonal relationships as a central concern in social interaction. In this light, what may superficially appear as teasing or mock-formality functions instead as a resource for constructing affiliative identities that transcend situational hierarchies.

Moreover, these findings extend the classical conceptualization of politeness proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987), particularly their model of positive politeness, which focuses on redressment of threat to positive face through expressions of common ground and in-group solidarity. However, the data suggest that the functions traditionally associated with positive politeness have expanded beyond their original scope in many contemporary conversational settings. Rather than serving solely to affirm shared identity or group membership, these pragmatic resources are strategically deployed to reframe or reorient the very nature of the interactional relationship. In doing so, they contribute to maintaining social harmony and actively constructing emergent, context-bound identities that reflect the fluidity and complexity of everyday social life.

The analysis reveals that pragmatic devices such as irony, humor, and strategic mitigation play a central role in the collaborative accomplishment of identity. They enable participants to navigate and negotiate the fine line between intimacy and distance, authority and affiliation, continuity and change within the microtemporal flow of conversation.

Comparative Relational Pragmatics

The analysis further reveals that in more affectionate and intimate interactional contexts, particularly evident in romantic (Data 3) and familial (Data 4) conversations, humour and strategic shifts in topic function not merely as conversational embellishments but as affiliative conflict postures. These resources allow participants to manage disagreement or tension while maintaining relational cohesion and affective alignment. Rather than destabilizing the interaction, such strategies reframe potential face threats as opportunities for intimacy and mutual understanding. This observation aligns closely with Arundale’s (2021) Face Constituting Theory (FCT), which conceptualizes face as an emergent property of interaction rather than a pre-existing concern. In this framework, interpersonal harmony is not presupposed but continuously co-constructed through moment-by-moment discursive practices.

Furthermore, these findings extend the Affiliation and Conflict Management Framework (ACMF) by demonstrating that markers of stance such as epistemic adverbs, affective intensifiers, and evaluative expressions, function systematically across relational domains to achieve identity alignment during moments of disagreement or tension. The recurrence of these patterns suggests that stance-taking is a reflexive indicator of speaker positioning and a performative mechanism through which social identities are dynamically negotiated and reaffirmed. In intimate settings, the alignment of stances often precedes and

facilitates resolution, underscoring the interdependence between epistemic orientation and relational identity work.

A cross-case comparative analysis involving multiple languages further illustrates that code-switching is a salient indexical resource, signaling shifts in epistemic status and relational positioning. Instances where speakers alternate between languages are not random but systematically linked to changes in footing, intimacy, and authority. Such linguistic choices reflect nuanced orientations toward knowledge distribution and relational distance, reinforcing the argument that language alternation functions as a pragmatic strategy for managing identity and face in multilingual interactions. This finding effectively translates Sifianou's (2019) insights on digital multilingual settings into the domain of face-to-face communication, demonstrating the broader applicability of her observations beyond computer-mediated discourse.

Together, these results highlight the centrality of pragmatic resources, whether lexical, prosodic, or translanguaging, in the micro-level accomplishment of identity and relational work. They contribute to ongoing theoretical developments in sociopragmatics and interactional sociolinguistics by illustrating how stance values, humour, topical shifts, and code-switching operate interactively to sustain affiliative postures, even in conflict. These mechanisms preserve and actively construct the relational realities within which identities emerge and evolve.

Relation to Pragmatic Models

The cross-case analysis reveals consistent patterns that affirm the enduring relevance of several foundational constructs in sociopragmatics and interactional linguistics. Notably, the deployment of politeness strategies across relational domains corroborates the theoretical framework proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987), particularly their delineation of positive and negative face-redressive strategies. Similarly, Goffman's (1959) conceptualization of facework as a central mechanism in social interaction finds empirical support in the observed ways speakers manage self- and other-presentations through sequential talk. Furthermore, the data align with Du Bois' (2007) stance-taking triangle, which emphasizes the interplay between alignment, evaluation, and footing as constitutive elements of intersubjective meaning-making. These classical frameworks provide a robust scaffolding for understanding how speakers navigate interpersonal concerns and negotiate relational identities in everyday conversations.

However, while these traditional models offer valuable insights into the pragmatics of interaction, they often presuppose relatively stable or context-bound identities, thereby underestimating identity construction's fluid and performative nature in dynamic conversational settings. The findings reveal that identity is not merely enacted following pre-established social roles but is continuously reconfigured in response to shifting relational dynamics, epistemic positioning, and affective alignments. This challenges the static conceptions of identity embedded in many conventional approaches and calls for more flexible, interactionally grounded models capable of capturing the emergent properties of identity in discourse.

In this regard, the application of Variable Models (VMs), specifically the Relational Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) Theory, the Contextual Identity Indexicality (CII) Hypothesis, and the Epistemic Identity Alignment Model (EIAM) proves essential in accounting for the mobility and multiplicity of identity performances across contexts. Unlike fixed-role frameworks, these dynamic models foreground identity's situated, sequential, and co-constructed nature, treating it as an outcome rather than a premise of interaction. RPIC, for instance, enables a nuanced understanding of how pragmatic resources are mobilized to construct relational identities contingent on discursive history and future-oriented projections. CII further explains how linguistic features index shifting identity positions, while EIAM captures the micro-dynamics of epistemic negotiation that accompany identity alignment processes.

By demonstrating how identity is dynamically configured within and across relational domains, this study thus advocates for a paradigm shift in sociopragmatics that moves beyond static, role-based accounts toward interactionally sensitive, processual understandings of identity. The integration of VMs offers a promising avenue for such a shift, enabling a more comprehensive theorization of identity as an embodied, dialogic, and context-sensitive phenomenon.

Discursive Identity Work in Interaction: Integrating RPIC, CII, and EIAM to Understand the Pragmatic Constitution of Social Selves

The findings of this study offer robust empirical support for the three theoretical models proposed: Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC), Contextual Identity Indexicality (CII), and Epistemic Identity Alignment Model (EIAM), each of which contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how identity is dynamically accomplished in interaction. By examining pragmatic strategies across multiple relational domains, the analysis demonstrates that identity is not a fixed or pre-given attribute but rather an emergent, sequential, and co-constructed phenomenon rooted in the micro-organization of talk-in-interaction.

Evidence from peer and familial interactions reveals that humour, mitigation, and stance-taking are central mechanisms where participants co-construct momentary identities. These resources are not merely stylistic or contextual embellishments but performative tools that actively shape relational positioning and social meaning-making. For instance, the recurring use of playful labels such as “Nature queen” illustrates how speakers collaboratively construct and sustain affiliative identities that reflect shared understandings, affective closeness, and mutual orientations toward relational work. Such practices align with Goffman’s (1967) notion of facework, yet they extend it by foregrounding the flexibility and performativity of relational identities within ongoing interaction. Rather than serving solely to protect face, these strategies become integral to enacting and negotiating temporary, context-bound selves responsive to local contingencies and broader relational histories.

The data substantiates the CII hypothesis, which posits that pragmatic features—particularly ironic language and laughter—serve as indexical cues that signal fluid, situational identities. In family interactions, for example, “Okay, chef” functions as a semiotic pivot, enabling siblings to shift roles of authority, playfulness, and solidarity within the same conversational sequence. These linguistic choices do not simply reflect existing identities; they instantiate new ones, thereby reconfiguring the relational landscape of the interaction. The CII framework thus enables a fine-grained analysis of how epistemic markers, laughter, and other interactional resources contribute to the real-time alignment of identities within specific relational frames. This perspective challenges static conceptions of identity by emphasizing its dynamic, interactionally grounded nature and underscores the importance of indexicality in sociopragmatic theory.

In institutional settings, the EIAM model proves particularly valuable in analyzing how epistemic authority and pedagogical rapport are negotiated discursively. The teacher’s utterance “Good that you asked” exemplifies how epistemic positioning is not unilaterally imposed but co-constructed through interactional moves that simultaneously affirm expertise and foster affiliation. This utterance serves dual functions: it validates the student’s question, thereby promoting a supportive learning environment and re-establishing the teacher’s role as a facilitator of knowledge. In doing so, it extends Heritage’s (2012) concept of the epistemic gradient—traditionally used to analyze asymmetrical knowledge distributions—by incorporating the relational dimensions of epistemic positioning. The EIAM model thus offers a more comprehensive account of how speakers navigate the tension between epistemic authority and interpersonal rapport, particularly in educational contexts where both dimensions are crucial for effective communication.

These findings collectively illustrate that pragmatic strategies are not peripheral to identity construction but are at its core. Humour, irony, stance-taking, and epistemic markers serve as linchpins in the interactional accomplishment of identity, allowing speakers to navigate complex relational terrains and negotiate shifting positions. Importantly, the RPIC, CII, and EIAM models provide a theoretical infrastructure that accounts for identity performance’s situated, sequential, and collaborative nature, moving beyond traditional frameworks that treat identity as a background variable or stable trait.

This study thus advocates for a paradigmatic shift in sociopragmatics that foregrounds identity not as a product of social structure but as an outcome of interactional practice. The proposed models open new avenues for investigating identity as a dynamic, multimodal, and deeply embedded phenomenon in everyday communication by integrating insights from conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, and discourse studies. To clarify the results of this study, which identified distinct patterns of identity negotiation through sequential discourse features, the researcher describes the following:

Data 1: Coffee shop conversation.

Participants: A and B (university students).

Student A: 'So, I'm thinking of going hiking this weekend.'

Student B: 'Oh wow, look at you! Nature queen!'

Student A: '[Laughs] Please, I'm just trying to get off my phone for once.'

In this initial conversational exchange between two university students in a casual coffee shop setting, identity is constructed through subtle pragmatic manoeuvres reflecting affiliative intentions and a playful stance. Student A's opening remark, 'So I'm thinking I might just go hiking this weekend', is a soft, hedged self-disclosure — a modestly framed prospective activity, possibly anticipating a supportive or curious response. However, Student B's response, 'Oh wow, look at you! Nature queen', introduces an exaggerated label that serves as ironic praise. This ironic modality signals a playful, positive politeness where the praise is not entirely serious. However, it functions to build solidarity and highlight the incongruity between the label 'nature queen' and Student A's presumed typical behaviour. This humour is crucial in managing relational alignment and introducing a momentary, co-constructed identity for Student A.

Importantly, Student A's laughter and subsequent self-deprecating comment, 'Please, I'm just trying to get off my phone for once', reframes the narrative and negotiates the imposed identity. Rather than embracing the 'nature queen' role, Student A presents themselves as someone seeking balance from digital fatigue. This interplay illustrates a dynamic form of identity negotiation, in which both speakers use pragmatic tools such as humour, hedging, laughter, exaggeration, and mitigation to construct, challenge, and redefine their identities.

From conversation analysis and pragmatics perspectives, this micro-interaction provides valuable insight into how identity is performed and negotiated through interactional choices, rather than merely expressed. The exaggerated label 'nature queen' functions as an indexical — a semiotic pointer to an identity temporarily invoked for humorous effect. This aligns with recent research emphasising the indexical nature of identity work in discourse (Bucholtz & Hall, 2003), in which speakers rely on contextual cues, tone and shared background knowledge to position one another. Student A's laughter is a key pragmatic marker of affiliative uptake, indicating that the teasing is understood as playful rather than critical and thus avoids threatening face. This also echoes the findings of Locher and Watts (2005), who emphasise that politeness and rudeness must be viewed as relational work. This perspective more accurately captures the nuanced interplay between identity assertions and denials in peer discourse. The negotiation between Student B's imposed identity and Student A's reframed self reflects the real-time co-construction of identity, demonstrating the speakers' agency and sensitivity to maintaining rapport and mutual alignment.

In theory, this data supports and extends the emerging Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) theory. This theory posits that identity is negotiated not through fixed labels or roles, but through the contextual deployment of pragmatic strategies that manage face, stance and alignment. In this case, irony and laughter are core mechanisms through which speakers shape their identities in the present moment, rather than being incidental. RPIC builds on and modifies Goffman's face theory and Brown and Levinson's politeness model by incorporating identity negotiation's more fluid, performative and interaction-sensitive elements. While traditional politeness theories often view ironic or humorous speech as face-threatening, this analysis shows that such speech can enhance face when embedded in shared norms of informality and playfulness, particularly in peer contexts. This reinforces the view that identity construction must be understood in terms of what is said, how, by whom and under what relational conditions it is said. Additionally, it intersects with the Contextual Identity Indexicality (CII) Hypothesis, which emphasises the contextual signalling function of pragmatic features such as exaggeration and laughter in constructing transient social identities.

More broadly, the findings significantly contribute to the scientific structure of sociopragmatics and interactional sociolinguistics by providing empirical evidence that identity emerges through interaction, is negotiated incrementally, and is shaped by context. They support a shift in the field away from viewing identity as a static category (e.g., student, introvert, athlete) towards viewing it as a discursively co-

constructed phenomenon responsive to both speaker intentions and interlocutor responses. This position is consistent with post-structuralist theories of identity, such as positioning theory proposed by Davies and Harré (1990), and CA-based identity studies focusing on moment-by-moment displays of identity. However, this study adds a detailed account of how everyday pragmatic markers, such as ironic address forms and affiliative laughter, function as tools for playing with identity in informal settings, such as casual peer interactions in public places.

These insights have practical implications beyond academic theorising. In interpersonal communication, particularly among young adults and peers, humour and ironic praise can serve as affiliative rituals that temporarily elevate or mock certain behaviours to test alignment and shared understanding. Recognising these strategies can aid the development of communication training that fosters better relational competence, particularly in intercultural or professional contexts where such cues may be misinterpreted. In educational environments, for instance, understanding how students build solidarity through humour could inform a pedagogy that leverages rather than suppresses such interactional creativity. Furthermore, the analysis encourages educators, therapists and communication professionals to view ironic and playful speech as central to identity performance and relational bonding, rather than as deviations from 'normative' communication.

In conclusion, Data 1 offers a microcosm of identity construction's dynamic, pragmatic and relational nature. It demonstrates how irony, humour and self-effacement are employed subtly to project, challenge and align identities in everyday conversation. This analysis reinforces and extends existing theoretical frameworks by showcasing the layered, indexical and contextually embedded identity features in interaction. Furthermore, it introduces novel theories, such as the RPIC Theory and the CII Hypothesis, which provide new insights into the pragmatic development of social identity and suggest practical ways to improve relational communication in everyday life.

Data 2: Dinner Table Debate

Participants: C and D (adult siblings).

D: "Mum always used to do it with garlic first. You're just making it up."

C: "No, she sometimes started with the garlic."

D: "Okay, chef, I bow to your superior memory."

C: '[Smirks] You should.'

This interaction between the adult siblings, engaged in a dinner table debate, reveals how identity is constructed and negotiated through everyday conversation. This seemingly mundane exchange, centering on the correct culinary sequence their mother used, serves as a rich site of identity performance and relational positioning. D begins the conversation with a bold assertion, claiming epistemic authority by stating, 'Mum always did it with garlic first', and accuses C of making it up, which implicitly delegitimises C's memory and constitutes a face-threatening act. This places D as a family expert, a speaker who positions themselves as the gatekeeper of familial knowledge and tradition. In response, C offers a partial counterclaim, softening the opposition by using mitigated repetition — 'She sometimes started with garlic, sometimes' — which suggests both disagreement and a conciliatory stance. This balance between assertion and moderation reflects C's awareness of the relational stakes involved; the goal is to be right and maintain the fabric of the sibling relationship.

The third turn, 'Okay, chef, I bow to your superior memory,' is a critical moment of ironic facework. D's sarcastic mock-deference shifts the focus of the conversation from an epistemic disagreement to a humorous display of playful interaction. The phrase 'Okay, chef' exaggerates C's claim to knowledge, subtly undermining it while signalling intimacy through playful teasing. This aligns with recent scholarship on affiliative conflict, which suggests that humour, irony and sarcasm can serve as tools for relational alignment and solidarity, rather than simply being face-threatening (Locher & Watts, 2025). C's smirking response, 'You should', completes the sequence by embracing the ironic frame, reinforcing their position with performative confidence while maintaining the playful tone. Thus, what begins as a contest over memory transforms into

a co-constructed identity event in which both speakers navigate epistemic authority, familial roles and interpersonal rapport through pragmatic strategies.

In theory, this data challenges and expands upon traditional politeness theories, such as the framework proposed by Brown and Levinson, which generally treat sarcasm and irony as inherently face-threatening. In contrast, the current analysis shows how these pragmatic tools can be used to repair relationships, particularly between close family members. Here, we see the emergence of what the study refers to as the Affiliative Conflict Management Framework (ACMF): a theoretical refinement that views minor disputes as chances to perform a shared identity, rather than as threats to social harmony. In this interaction, both C and D engage in mutual identity calibration: C is the competent, authoritative sibling and D is the challenger who, through ironic submission, ultimately aligns with C's stance. These identity roles are not static, but interactionally negotiated in the moment, reinforcing the study's overarching claim that identity is constructed through pragmatic moves embedded in everyday conversation.

Integrating these findings into the broader structures of pragmatics and conversation analysis, the study builds on Heritage's (2012) work on epistemic stance, particularly emphasising how speakers position themselves with knowledge claims. However, it advances the discussion by demonstrating that affective and relational motives often accompany epistemic positioning. While D's sarcasm ostensibly undermines C's knowledge claim, it simultaneously maintains sibling closeness through humorous engagement. This dual function highlights the need to reconsider epistemic stance as a multifaceted act that conveys knowledge or ignorance, social identity, and relational positioning. Furthermore, this interaction supports recent developments in relational pragmatics, which view identity as an emergent, co-constructed property of interaction (Arundale, 2021). By demonstrating that identity roles such as 'expert', 'sceptic', or 'peacemaker' are constructed locally and are fluid within context, the analysis contributes to a growing body of work that rejects essentialist notions of identity in favour of a dynamic, practice-oriented perspective.

In practical terms, the implications of these findings extend to interpersonal communication in family and organisational settings. Understanding how irony and epistemic contestation function in identity formation can inform communication strategies in conflict resolution, counselling and educational contexts. For example, recognising the affiliative potential of sarcasm in sibling or peer interactions can help therapists or mediators to distinguish between hostile conflict and playful rapport maintenance. Similarly, educators can use these insights to navigate classroom disputes without undermining student dignity, leveraging humour and mitigated authority to sustain relational and pedagogical goals. Thus, this research contributes theoretical innovations and actionable frameworks for analysing and improving real-world interactions. The central claim of this study is vividly illustrated by the dinner table debate data: that identity construction is an active, situated, and pragmatic process. By carefully analysing turn-taking, irony, and epistemic negotiation, we reveal how everyday conversations provide opportunities for ongoing identity development. The data challenges simplistic binaries such as politeness versus impoliteness, conflict versus harmony, and authority versus submission. Instead, it shows that speakers engage in a complex interplay of strategic moves to enact, negotiate, and sometimes resist social identities. This emphasises the importance of an integrated approach to conversation analysis and pragmatics — one that considers both the micro-level mechanics of conversation and its macro-level implications for our understanding of the self and society.

Data 3: Office break room talk

Participants E and F are colleagues having a casual conversation during a break at work.

E: 'I just slept in all day. Nothing exciting.'

F: 'Hey, that's the dream, isn't it?'

E: '[Laughs] True. I'm not going to pretend I hated it.'

This excerpt from a conversation between colleagues E and F in the office break room reveals a subtle yet powerful example of how identity is constructed through everyday pragmatic strategies within casual workplace talk. In this concise dialogue, the interlocutors collectively fashion affiliative identities, anchored in mutual comprehension, informality, and a collective experience of workplace fatigue. E's initial utterance,

'I just slept in all day. Nothing exciting', is a self-effacing statement that downplays any claim to productivity or excitement. This strategy aligns with modesty and self-deprecation as forms of pragmatic softening. This can be interpreted as a pre-emptive facework act where E manages the risk of being perceived as unproductive by presenting their weekend behaviour as ordinary. F responds with a highly affiliative and positively aligned utterance: 'Hey, that's the dream, isn't it?', which functions as both validation and ironic praise. This not only affirms E's narrative, but also redefines the act of 'sleeping in' as socially desirable, thereby transforming E's identity from one of laziness or dullness to one of authenticity and self-care. E's final contribution — laughter followed by 'True. I'm not gonna pretend I hated it' — reinforces solidarity and further solidifies the co-construction of a relaxed, honest and relatable identity. This progression exemplifies how everyday conversation allows for the negotiation and affirmation of shared values, particularly within peer relationships in institutional contexts.

This micro-level analysis significantly contributes to our understanding of identity construction in pragmatics, foregrounding how speakers actively perform and negotiate identities through affiliative strategies such as modesty, ironic alignment and humour. This finding is theoretically significant as it challenges traditional politeness frameworks (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987), focusing primarily on mitigating face threats. Instead, it highlights how identity is constructed through positive alignment and mutual recognition of shared realities. The data here supports and extends the notion of 'relational work' proposed by Locher and Watts (2005), who argue that identity and (im)politeness emerge in social practice and are inseparable from the relational goals of speakers. Rather than merely mitigating a potential threat to face, F's utterance redefines the terms of evaluation, transforming the act of 'doing nothing' into something aspirational. This act is not merely about politeness, but also about repositioning identity within a shared framework that reflects the contemporary work culture in which rest and non-productivity are increasingly valued to resist burnout and overwork.

This interaction also provides empirical support for the new theoretical contribution offered by this study: the Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) Theory. This theory emphasises the real-time, interactive co-construction of identity through pragmatic resources. According to RPIC, speakers do not merely express pre-existing identities; rather, they negotiate, adjust and perform them through nuanced strategies that reflect their positioning concerning one another. Office break room talk illustrates this, with E moving from a potentially negative identity of passivity to one of transparency and relatability, entirely through F's affiliative reframing. RPIC thus builds on Goffman's concept of 'face' by focusing on emergent relational positioning through contextualised pragmatic tools such as laughter, irony and frame-shifting.

Furthermore, the exchange supports the Contextual Identity Indexicality (CII) Hypothesis, which was also introduced in this study. This hypothesis posits that pragmatic cues such as laughter, modality ('I'm not going to pretend') and ironic praise function as indexicals of social identity. These cues signal fluid, situational identities negotiated in interaction, not fixed categories. In this case, shared employee fatigue and informal collegiality are signalled by laughter and mutual recognition. This finding aligns with the results of recent studies, including Arundale's (2021) research, which suggests that the meanings of identities are shaped by lexical content and how speakers coordinate meanings in interactional sequences. Our analysis adds to this discussion by offering data based on real-life situations and demonstrating these processes where they occur. This finding has both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, it challenges the view of workplace discourse as merely transactional or hierarchical, instead presenting it as a context for the co-construction of identity through relational pragmatics. It emphasises the significance of seemingly trivial everyday conversation in fostering workplace solidarity and well-being. Understanding how employees construct shared identities through informal conversation could inform organisational communication strategies to enhance team cohesion, particularly in high-stress environments. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of institutions recognising and supporting the social aspects of employee interaction, as these significantly impact morale, mutual support and organisational culture. In pedagogical contexts, this example can also be used to teach students. It can teach them how linguistic choices function in real-time. These choices shape identity and relational meaning. This makes abstract concepts in pragmatics and conversation analysis more tangible and applicable.

To sum up, the conversation in the office breakroom analysed here vividly shows how our sense of who we are is shaped together through practical interaction. The speakers navigate social roles and co-construct an identity of shared experience and informal collegiality through modesty, ironic praise, laughter, and mutual affirmation. This finding not only validates current theories in pragmatics and interactional sociolinguistics, but also it also offers new conceptual tools for analysing how identity emerges in everyday talk. Examples of these tools include RPIC and CII. These tools are vital for grasping the intricate, frequently nuanced ways speakers utilise language to shape, challenge, and align with social identities in their immediate environments.

Data 4: Relationship Talk

Participants: G and H (a dating couple)

H: 'You always leave your socks on the floor.'

G: 'It's not always. You just notice the times I do.'

H: '[Laughs] Because it's every day!'

G: "OK, guilty. But at least I cook, right?"

The analysis of Data 4 is interesting. This data captures a mundane yet revealing exchange between a dating couple, G and H. It provides a rich illustration of how identity is constructed and negotiated through everyday conversational pragmatics. The exchange, centred around a minor domestic complaint, demonstrates how individuals manage relational dynamics and personal face in real time. They do this by drawing on humour, mitigation and strategic redirection to co-construct identities that maintain intimacy and equilibrium. H's opening remark, 'You always leave your socks on the floor', is a classic example of a face-threatening act (FTA) in the terms of Brown and Levinson (1987), yet it is delivered in a context where such complaints are softened by familiarity and the norms of romantic partnership. Rather than becoming defensive or causing conflict, G responds, 'It's not always. ... you notice the times I do,' strategically reframes the accusation. This utterance is a clear example of epistemic mitigation, shifting the focus from an absolute behavioural critique to the partner's perception. This preserves G's positive face while subtly challenging the claim. H's subsequent laughter ("Because it's every day!") serves multiple purposes: it signals humour, relieves tension, and indicates relational closeness. G's final response, 'Okay, guilty. But at least I cook, right?', completes the identity negotiation process by accepting partial blame in a humorous and face-saving manner, while also redirecting the evaluation frame towards a positive contribution. This allows G to reclaim their competence and value within the relationship.

This micro-interaction reveals the subtle and layered mechanisms through which personal and relational identities are produced through conversation. The strategic use of humour, irony, and mitigation defuses potential conflict and performs affiliative work that strengthens social bonds. These findings challenge traditional pragmatics models that view politeness merely as a means of avoiding loss of face. Instead, this data supports a more nuanced perspective that aligns with the relational work approach of Locher and Watts (2005), which posits that politeness and impoliteness are better understood as the context-dependent negotiation of relationships rather than the adherence to abstract formulas for saving face. The relational pragmatics framework enables us to see how everyday conversation among close acquaintances serves as a platform for intricate identity performances, where individuals adopt roles such as 'the disorganised partner', 'the forgiving one', or 'the supportive caregiver' — not through direct assertion, but via pragmatic strategies inherent in the conversation.

This analysis reveals a new theory: the Affiliative Conflict Management Framework (ACMF). This framework was developed to explain how identity is co-constructed in interactions where conflict is transformed into relational work, rather than being avoided. In intimate relationships, conflict — particularly concerning routine domestic behaviours — is not inherently negative or disruptive. On the contrary, it becomes a means by which partners can reaffirm their roles, negotiate their contributions and test the flexibility of their relational norms. In this framework, humour is not merely a face-saving mechanism, but a tool for relational recalibration — allowing participants to critique, defend and praise without damaging the underlying

solidarity. The couple's conversation in the data set illustrates this well: G's humorous response ('But at least I cook') is not a logical retort, but rather a pragmatic attempt to restore balance, evoking a meaningful compensatory identity in the context of the relationship.

This analytical approach significantly builds upon Brown and Levinson's model and Goffman's concept of facework, integrating real-time epistemic positioning with affective alignment strategies. It also builds upon the work of Haugh and Chang (2019), who emphasise the significance of interactional co-construction in politeness and relational identity. The analysis shows how speakers shift dynamically between epistemic stances (assertive, defensive or humorous) and relational roles (accuser, defender or reconciler) to maintain coherent, mutually acceptable interpersonal equilibrium. Furthermore, the data contribute to emerging scholarship on interactional accountability, wherein speakers manage moral and relational expectations through language. G's shift from defending behaviour to highlighting a compensatory action suggests an awareness of shared household scripts and a willingness to negotiate those scripts in a playful manner rather than in a rigid way.

Practically speaking, this insight has consequences for counselling, relationship coaching and training in interpersonal communication. Conflictual topics can be navigated through affiliative pragmatics, which equips partners, therapists, and educators with tools to foster healthy communication patterns. In particular, the ACMF emphasises that not all criticism should be avoided, but rather it can be reframed, mitigated and used to promote positive relationships. This aligns with the findings of recent relationship studies (Cohen et al., 2003), which show that couples who can 'fight playfully' tend to report greater satisfaction and emotional resilience. Theoretically, the study propels the field of pragmatics towards a more holistic model of identity work — one that considers not only politeness and power, but also play, co-membership and the emotional dynamics of daily life.

Ultimately, this case study demonstrates that identity is not a fixed label but a collaborative achievement negotiated through the subtle, moment-to-moment pragmatics of conversation. The interaction reveals that even a mundane domestic complaint is an opportunity for identity performance, in which speakers use conversational resources to express dissatisfaction and reaffirm shared belonging, roles and contributions. This detailed analysis shows us that language is not just a tool for communication, but also a means of constructing our identities concerning each other, particularly in the intimate domains of everyday life.

Data 5: Student–Teacher Interaction

Participants: I (teacher) and J (student).

J: "Wait, isn't the assignment due next week, not this Friday?"

I: 'According to the syllabus, it's this Friday.'

J: 'Oh... I must've misread it.'

I: 'It's OK, I'm glad you asked.'

This interaction between students and teachers in the 'Student–Teacher Interaction' data set provides fertile ground for exploring identity construction through pragmatics in everyday institutional discourse. This exchange illustrates how identities are not static but dynamically negotiated and performed through language use, particularly in asymmetrical power relations. In this example, the student challenges an assumed fact about an assignment's due date: 'Wait, isn't the assignment due next week, not this Friday?' This utterance functions as both a question and a form of epistemic assertion, suggesting that the student understands the timeline differently. Here, J implicitly positions themselves as knowledgeable or entitled to ask questions and challenge, which is noteworthy given the hierarchical nature of the teacher–student relationship. In response, the teacher uses the syllabus to invoke institutional authority ("According to the syllabus, it's this Friday"), a strategic move reinforcing their epistemic primacy and institutional identity. This turn marks a shift in the epistemic gradient, repositioning the teacher as the authoritative knowledge-holder, thereby establishing a new paradigm in which the teacher is no longer merely an instructor but rather becomes the custodian of knowledge. However, the interaction does not remain strictly hierarchical. The student concedes. They say, "Oh... I must've misread it." This reconstructs their identity. Initially they were

assertive. Now they are deferential and self-correcting. The teacher's final response, "It's okay, good that you asked", is an important example of positive politeness, reestablishing rapport and softening the asymmetry. It reflects a pedagogical identity that values enquiry and student engagement over punishing error or challenge.

The pragmatic strategies employed, questioning, mitigation, reference to institutional texts, self-effacement and positive politeness are tools of effective communication and integral to the identities being enacted. From a conversation analysis (CA) perspective, each turn is locally occasioned and sequentially relevant; however, from a pragmatic standpoint, it also serves a face-management function (Goffman, 1967; Brown & Levinson, 1987). The interplay between J's initial assertiveness and I's authoritative yet affiliative response exemplifies the co-construction of interactional identities oscillating between deference and empowerment. This exchange is an example of a dialogic process in which identity is not imposed by status alone, but is instead shaped through interactional choices. Drawing on Heritage's (2012) work on epistemic status and stance, this interaction reveals a shift from symmetrical epistemic access (J's initial challenge) to an accepted asymmetry (J's subsequent concession), which is mediated by strategic politeness to maintain relational harmony.

This data represents a significant theoretical advancement, giving rise to what we might term the Epistemic Identity Alignment Model (EIAM). This emerging framework posits that identity construction in asymmetrical settings, such as classrooms, offices or medical interactions, frequently hinges on managing epistemic claims and denials. Unlike Heritage's (2012) focus on institutional control over epistemic access, this model highlights how speakers voluntarily change their epistemic stance as a form of identity performance, driven by pragmatic goals such as avoiding conflict, preserving dignity or fostering affiliation. In J's case, shifting from challenging to conceding is not merely a withdrawal, but an identity realignment demonstrating learning, humility and social appropriateness. I's reassurance ('Good that you asked') further reconstructs the teacher's identity, shifting from strict authority to a collaborative guide. This aligns with Locher and Watts' (2005) view that relational work in institutional talk involves navigating both role expectations and personal rapport.

Furthermore, this finding challenges simplistic binaries such as teacher versus student or expert versus novice. Instead, it supports the view that interactional roles are fluid and co-constructed through pragmatic actions. As Arundale (2021) argues in his Face Constituting Theory, face is not a pre-existing asset that can be threatened or protected; rather, it is co-constituted in real time through interaction. This principle is vividly illustrated in the teacher's mitigation of potential embarrassment and the student's soft surrender of epistemic ground, collaboratively constructing a learning-focused identity framework. This interaction highlights that politeness actively shapes the pedagogical relationship, not merely a veneer over power.

In practical terms, this insight has significant implications for educational communication. Teachers who strategically use institutional references without alienating students help create an environment where enquiry is encouraged rather than discouraged. The data suggests that affirming student questions, even incorrect ones, can reinforce respectful curiosity and active engagement identities. These interactive patterns are reflected in recent pedagogical discourse, for example, in the research of Zhang & Jin (2016) on interactional competence, which emphasises the importance of pragmatic sensitivity in educational settings. Similarly, Sifianou (2019) notes that, in digitally mediated classrooms, striking the right balance between authority and solidarity is even more challenging, making the kinds of pragmatic strategies seen here particularly vital.

In conclusion, this single instance of everyday conversation encapsulates a microcosm of identity work, in which institutional roles are negotiated through finely tuned pragmatic strategies. The conversation clarifies more than just a due date; it also reveals how the speakers manage knowledge claims, interpersonal rapport and concerns about face to construct their identities in this interaction. Through conversation analysis and pragmatics, this exchange demonstrates that identity is enacted through laughter, repair, epistemic deference and positive reinforcement, rather than simply declared. This research's novel contribution lies in its theoretical articulation of epistemic identity alignment as a pragmatic strategy, offering a model that integrates relational goals, institutional roles, and dynamic face negotiation. This advances the broader field

of discourse pragmatics by demonstrating that identity is constantly in flux and shaped by conversations' sequential structure and the relational imperatives of human interaction.

Conclusions

The paper progresses on identity as pragmatically negotiated in interaction and puts forward valuable pedagogical suggestions. RPIC and EIAM can help teachers or curriculum designers create classroom conditions that promote epistemic engagement without compromising relational harmony. The education of language learners to perceive linguistic humour, affiliation and mitigation can help them to become more pragmatic in their multilingual speaking. In the meantime, interpersonal implications include the findings seeking to provide a more subtle interpretation of how humour, irony, and mitigation can go through the tensions of relations in a romantic, familial, and collegial sphere. This endorses therapeutic and counselling activity that constitutes minor conflict to recalibrate relationships.

Alternatively, this research paper also provides some valuable cross-cultural implications. CII sheds light on the issue of identity markers differentiated by cultural script: high-contextual vs low-contextual (Peter, 2021) and speech-act variation between cultures (Usmani and Almashham, 2024); pragmatic competence should be aware of these indexical variations. Future research can contrast RPIC and EIAM applications to high-power-distance cultures and low-power-distance cultures (Hall contexts) to advance the knowledge of enactment in relationships in new cultural contexts.

The research shows that the way people construct their identities in everyday conversation is a process that is affected by the context and is created through interaction. This process is performed and negotiated through a range of pragmatic strategies. Across five different relational settings, participants consistently used humour, irony, mitigation, stance-taking and epistemic alignment to construct social personae and manage interpersonal relationships. The data demonstrate that pragmatic features are indexicals that signal and shape relational identity. This supports the study's three theoretical contributions: The Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) Theory is about how we construct our identities through pragmatic strategies dependent on the context. The Contextual Identity Indexicality (CII) Hypothesis is concerned with the features that are key to shifts in identity, such as laughter, exaggeration and irony. And the Epistemic Identity Alignment Model (EIAM) looks at how speakers manage knowledge claims to maintain relational equilibrium, especially in asymmetrical interactions. These findings affirm that identity is not pre-discursively held but is collaboratively co-constructed through situated talk. For example, irony and mitigation are used in sibling and romantic interactions to transform disagreement into affiliative conflict rather than escalate it. In contrast, identity shifts are achieved in institutional settings through calibrated epistemic positioning and positive politeness. This study advances theoretical and empirical understanding in sociopragmatics and CA by demonstrating that relational work and identity construction are continuous, inseparable processes embedded within the micro-sequential structures of everyday interaction.

We recommend applying the RPIC, CII, and EIAM frameworks for future research. These should be used in multilingual or digitally mediated interactions. In these cases, identity negotiation may involve additional complexity. This is due to language switching or platform norms. Furthermore, subsequent studies could investigate how cultural differences influence applying and understanding pragmatic approaches in identity formation. The cross-cultural applicability of the theoretical models proposed in this study would be enriched by comparative work.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest concerning the publication of this paper.

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